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| APPLICATION NO. | FILING DATE | FIRST NAMED INVENTOR | ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. | CONFIRMATION NO. |
|--|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 10/533,317 | 02/08/2006 | Michael Matthew Hourn | A-9453 | 5301 |
| 7590 Martin P. Hoffman Hoffman Wasson & Gitler 2461 South Clark Street Suite 522 Crystal Center 2 Arlington, VA 22202 | | | | |
| 04/24/2008 | | | | |
| EXAMINER | | | | |
| MCGUTHRY BANKS, TIMA MICHELE | | | | |
| ART UNIT | | PAPER NUMBER | | |
| 1793 | | | | |
| MAIL DATE | | DELIVERY MODE | | |
| 04/24/2008 | | PAPER | | |

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/533,317

Applicant(s)

HOURN ET AL.

Examiner

TIMA M. MCGUTHRY-BANKS

Art Unit

1793

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 11 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-946)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/55/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 4/29/05
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date ____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: ____

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

Claims 1-11 are as originally presented.

Claim Objections

Claim 8 is objected to because of the following informalities: for purposes of examination, the examiner will assume that "60-95°" refers to a Celsius temperature scale as in Claims 11. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 recites the limitation "the partially oxidized material" in lines 5 and 6. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1-4, 6, 7 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jones (US 5,869,012).

Jones teaches a hydrometallurgical treatment of metal ores or concentrates. Pressure oxidation neutralization occurs inside an autoclave or pressure vessel as shown in Figure 3:

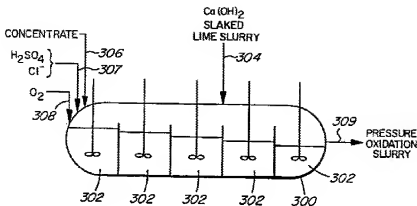


FIG. 3

This stream is returned to pressure oxidation step 12 in Figure 1. Jones also teaches suppressing oxidation of sulfur emanating from the concentrate in the pressure oxidation stage (column 5, lines 28-31). Sulfur oxidation is reduced to 5-10% (lines 35-37) or 2-16% (column 6, lines 10-12). The material is later subjected to cyanide leaching (Figure 6; column 20, lines 28-36). The claimed transitional term “comprising”, which is synonymous with “including,” “containing,” or “characterized by,” is inclusive or open-ended and does not exclude additional, unrecited Elements or method steps, such as those recited in Jones. See MPEP § 2111.03. Regarding the range of oxidation, in the case where the claimed ranges overlap or lie inside ranges disclosed by the prior art, a *prima facie* case of obviousness exists. See MPEP § 2144.05. Regarding Claim 2, copper sulfide ore is used (column 1, line 57). Regarding Claim 3, copper ore is ground to P80 (column 4, lines 55-58). Regarding Claim 4, slaked lime, $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$, is used (column 16, lines 49 and 50). Regarding Claim 6, the claimed ranges overlap. Regarding Claim 7, oxygen is used. Regarding Claim 10, gold or silver are recovered (column 20, line 47).

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 11 is allowed.

Claims 5, 8 and 9 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: Jones teaches the pH of pressure leaching of 2-2.5 (column 11, line 67); Jones teaches away from a higher pH in column 12, lines 11-13. Jones also teaches pressure leaching temperature in a temperature of 115-160 °C (column 2, lines 33-35). Jones also teaches pressure leaching at a pressure of 800-1500 kPa (8-14.8 atm). There is no basis to suggest leaching at a pH of between 5-7 as in claims 5 and 11, at a temperature of between 60-95 C as in Claims 8 and 11, or at a pressure of 1 atm or less as in Claims 9 and 11.

Hourn et al (US 6,833,021 B1) teaches processing a mineral composition comprising a refractory material comprising milling the composition to a particle size of P80 or less than 25 microns and leaching the composition with a solution comprising lime and/or limestone in the presence of an oxygen containing gas. However Hourn et al does not disclose or suggest an amount of or controlling oxidation between 9-20% as in Claim 1 and between 9-12% as in Claim 11.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to TIMA M. MCGUTHRY-BANKS whose telephone number is (571)272-2744. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:00 am - 3:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King can be reached on (571) 272-1244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Roy King/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit
1793

/T. M. M./
Examiner, Art Unit 1793
24 April 2008